SUZANNE HAÏK-VANTOURA

the 150 psalms

in their ancient melodies

PART ONE

Introduction

The Deciphering Key

Psalmody
Comparative Study

Translated by Dennis Weber & Timothy Janz

Psalms 1 - 75
without accompaniment

FONDATION ROI DAVID

9 rue d'Artois, Paris, France

A Word from the Editor

Very important

Although the ancient melodies of the psalms are a restoration of the Bible's own original music, they are also the fruit of the deciphered musical signs which figure in the Hebrew text as decoded by Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura. Therefore these melodies are the exclusive property of the author.

Any performance which is not conform to these Psalms is forbidden. Any reproduction or graphical imitation is also forbidden.

No recording is permitted without accompaniment, and such accompaniment must be the author's herself in exclusion of all others. Requests for her accompaniments may be addressed to the Fondation Roi David[1].

Offenders will be liable to legal action.

1. We wish to thank Editions Choudens for permission to print the fourteen psalms already published in two collections with accompaniments. They are Psalms 3, 6, 8, 19, 23, 24, 93, 96, 122, 123, 130, 131, 137, and 150.

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PREFACE

This publication of the 150 Psalms in their ancient melodic settings (without accompaniments) is first of all the response to numerous requests for one psalm or another as yet unpublished by Editions Choudens, and secondly, to face up to the different attempts to make use of the deciphering key often submitted to the author, along with a solicitation of her comments and corrections.

The need has become apparent, with respect to these works, to give a sample pattern of each psalm's rendition. The careful precision of the notation possesses abbreviational principles which must be thoroughly respected. Furthermore, this notation, like all other prior to the end of the Middle Ages, has no signs to indicate the modes (Gregorian chant is no different). To detect these modes is a difficult art which requires a high degree of musical expertise. Each verse and each psalm must be read or sung in the "mode' which suits the particular expression of the words in the general context of the poem.

These are the two important reasons which motivated this extensive undertaking here rendered in the service of the Bible.

The Psalms have been scrutinized from generation to generation for 3000 years. Now their ancient melodies clarify gheir meaning and elevate their expression. To present them here integrally is to preserve a precious heritage for humanity.

Fondation Roi David

INTRODUCTION

Long ago I read in a musical encyclopedia that the cantillation signs which, along with the vowel points, figure above and below the texts in present day Hebrew Bibles, are ancient and musical, and that their real meaning had been lost. Intrigued by this information, I resolved to try to penetrate their mystery (since I am both composer and music theorician).

Guided by the Hebrew text itself -- which the signs were designed to punctuate, yet really did little to clarify it (punctuation signs did not yet exist during Bible times) -- I undertook my research. I first discovered that the signs placed under the text represented consecutive degrees of a tonal scale. Much later I was able to conclude that the upper signs also represented notes. But the pitch of these notes was relative to the note of the scale degree represented by the preceding lower sign (which is still the role of ornaments in our modern notation).

Thanks to this "Rosetta Stone" which for me was the Hebrew text, I gradually recovered the musical meaning of every upper sign. The resultant melodies of the combination of lower and upper signs were very beautiful and the meaning of the verses was rendered much clearer.

x-x-x-x-x-x-x

In 1976, after several years of research, more than fifty major portions of the Bible had arisen from the deciphering. A first record was pressed, "LA MUSIQUE DE LA BIBLE REVELEE" (Harmonia Mundi) followed by a second in 1979 (Erato) under the same title.

The book of 560 pages, explaining the deciphering process and historical study that I undertook meanwhile concerning the notation, was published in 1976 (Edition Robert Dumas, Paris). The second printing occurred in 1978 (Edition Dessain & Tolra, Paris). This book received

the high approbation of the Chief Rabbi of France, Jacob Kaplan, and was granted honors by the Institut de France as well. The musical renditions of the two records received a warm reception by the press and press and music critics ("Diapason d'Or").

In 1978 and 1980 two collections of music were publised as companion scores for the two records (Edition Choudens, Paris). These collections showed the stability of the deciphering key whichis explained in the end pages of each collection. The melodic meaning attributed to each musical sign remains unchanged throughout. The location and the shape of the signs is strictly respected (especially the location at the end of a syllable for the upper signs which no one took into account until here ; however, this has a decisive effect on the resultant melody).

What is the result of this meticulous interpretation of the signs ? A noble music emerges, full of emotion, sometimes majestic, and faithfully expressing the spirit of the texts themselves. This music naturally emphasizes the tonic and expressive accents of the words, punctuation and syntax. My accompaniment is simply a finishing touch to these melodies so complete in themselves. But according to the Biblical stipulations (and customs of that time) the psalms were always accompanied.

In 1983 my discovery was presented at the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem and after careful scrutiny was confirmed and much appreciated, just as it was by the greatest occidental composers before its publication in 1976.

x-x-x-x-x

Before 1976, I gave myself to laborious research. In order to do this I resolutely limited myself to the rendition of fifty different portions of the Bible.

Since that time, thanks to the aid of a small team of benevolent coworkers, as enthousiastic as they are diligent, the number of renditions is considerably greater.

And now the entire 150 Psalms in their ancient melodic settings is published as melodies without accompaniment. The comparative analysis reveals important and useful conclusions.

Shortly a third record of fourteen new Biblical portions along with companion scores will be released, as well as the entire Song of Solomon arranged for two soloists, two vocal ensembles, concert harp and alto flute.

The Five Scrolls (Meghilot) -- Esther, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Ruth and Song of Solomon -- are scheduled for publication without accompaniment thereafter, as well as large portions of the Pentateuch (notably the story of Joseph) and the Prophets (especially Isaiah).

x-x-x-x-x

All these musical works, characterized by intense religious expression, are purely the result of the strict and systematic application of the deciphering key.

One further point of precision : The Hebrew Bible I made use of, containing the vowel points and the "te'amim" (the cantillation signs of highest tradition) is identical to the Masoretic version[1], based on the most ancient extant manuscripts which possess these signs (9th and 10 th c. A. D.). This version is unanimously recognized as the authentic tradition.

The following explanation will justify this particular point. The shapes and the locations of these ancestral signs were not always respected by the authors of the manuscripts after the 10th century and the different editions since then[2]. Thus, when the reader compares the cantillation signs given here in these two volumes of psalms in their

1. French Colbo Edition, whose plates are taken from the 19 th century Letteris Edition of Stuttgart. The Masoretic versions of the various international editions are strictly conform to the Letteris edition, a fact which we observed ourselves.
2. Especially MS B 19 of the Leningrad Library, dating from 1008, on whi the Kittel Edition is based.

rightful locations and with their exact shapes -- with those in a Bible which is not conform to the Masoretic version, he will discover differences. This is the reason for them !

x-x-x-x-x

Through my deciphering key the signs are automatically transcribed into notes of our modern notation. Only the right mode remains to be discovered, but we know it is like that for all music prior to the Renaissance, including Gregorian chant ![1]

The modes of the Biblical melodies which resurrect from my deciphering are the most common ones of antiquity to the present. These modes were known in ancient Greece and are still used in our religious and secular songs of Europe and Israel, from the most ancient times to today.

x-x-x-x-x

The synagogal cantillations make use of vocal formulae assigned to the same signs in question.

But in conformity with the arbitrary alterations of the cantillation signs as we mentioned earlier, only certain signs receive a sort of vocal "motif". Other signs are considered secondary and are not taken into consideration. Others are displaced to other syllables of the word than on the ones they affect. Finally, other signs are substituted for the original ones, so that in the end the vocal formulae vary from one community to another, and even within the same community, varying from one book to another in the Bible.

This "free" interpretation of the ancestral signs of the cantillation only came into use in the 13th century.

Previously, in the synagogues, an entire psalm or chapter was can-

1. Cf. Paléographie musicale (Benedictine monks of Solesmes). Les principaux manuscrits de chant grégorien, Part Two, Tome 1 (vol.21).

tilated to only one single vocal formula adapted to the first verse, then repeated for all succeding verses, being lengthened or shortened to fit the length of the different verses. This form of cantillation is called "primitive."

But this is still the way the Psalms are chanted in the synagogue for the vocal "motifs" in question are not applied to the prose portions of the Bible.

The ancient melodies that we restore to the Bible are thus the unique psalmody produced by these ancient signs and are most likely the very psalmody that was employed in the Temple of Jerusalem[1]. The musical renditions confirm this affirmation.

Suzanne Haik-Vantoura

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1. The historical research behind this notation and the deciphering process are fully detailed in my book. There is no need to go into further explanations of the same material in these pages.

I dedicate this Collection to those who gave me their efficient and unflagging he to render these psalms.

For reasons which I personally regret, each one desires not to be named here.

I remain deeply indebted to them and am grateful for their help, for without them the 150 Psalms could never have been rendered.

x-x-x-x-x

THE DECIPHERING KEY

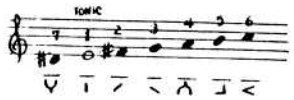
Psalmody

א אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים וּבְדֶרֶךְ
2 חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד וּבְמוֹשַׁב לֵצִים לֹא יָשָׁב: כִּי אִם־בְּתוֹרַת
3 יְהוָה חֶפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה: וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ
שָׁתוּל עַל־פַּלְגֵי מָיִם אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ ו יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא
4 יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ: לֹא כֵן הָרְשָׁעִים כִּי אִם־

The beginning of Psalm 1, showing the te'amim and vowel points.

The musical signs of the Bible, the "te'amim," comprise two systems which present great similarities. The first system is reserved for the prose texts and is used in twenty-one books. The other system is only in the three other books -- Psalms, Proverbs, and part of the book of Job.

The lower signs in both systems represent the basic degrees of a diatonic scale. In the prosodaic system this scale possesses eight tones, C to C. Its fundamental note, the "tonic" or first degree is located on the 3rd degree of the scale.

In the psalmodic system which concerns us here, the scale has only seven tones. The lowest note of the scale is omitted and thus the fundamental degree is found on the second degree of the scale.

Notice that in this scale system two notes are altered, being D ♯ and F ♯ [1]

x-x-x-x-x

e

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1. For all our transcriptions here the note E has been chosen to systematically represent tonic.

The Lower Signs are governed by important rules of abbreviation.

The first rule : the note represented by each lower sign remains valid until another lower sign is given. This is an ingenious means of not overloading the real Bible text.

The presentation, in half and quater notes, for the melodies which follow, is evidence of this rule. Notes which correspond to the signs we indicate by half notes and those resulting from their prolongation are quarternotes. So, in these psalms, the manner in which they are notated with half and quarter notes does not indicate length or rhythm at all (cf. Ps. 1:1).

The second rule : the first note of any verse, unless otherwise indicated, is always the tonic, even though the sign itself ⊼ may not be given. If it is present it indicates that the note itself is lightly accented[1].

x-x-x-x-x

The Upper Signs do not have a fixed pitch. Their pitches are relative to the basic degree on which they are constructed, as represented by lower signs. Whether it is the note B or its repetition.

Here then are the notes represented by each of the seven upper signs when they follow the lower sign ⊼ :

For all other basic degrees (lower signs) the notes represented by the upper signs are constructed in relationship to them, at analogous intervals (cf. the summary tables at the end of both volumes). Nowhere in the 850 pages of music that follow do we give notes other than those which figure in these tables.

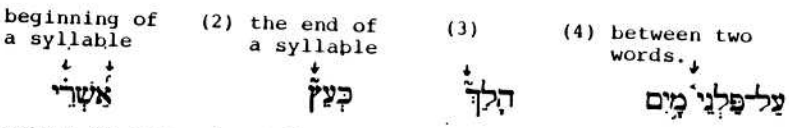
1. It follows the same for the rest of the verse : the repetition of a same lower sign signifies accentuation.

2. Same tonal relationship.

An absolute rule : each upper sign only affects the syllable over which it is placed. As soon as the next syllable begins the previous lower sign regains its function unless there is a new lower sign. We indicate this reintegration by a quarter note as in the conventional notation we explained earlier. Thus one can easily notice that no note dictated by a sign is omitted and no other note is added.

An important remark concerning the particular location of the signs. The signs, especially the upper ones, are often placed ostensibly at the end of syllable (the reader will remember that Hebrew is read from right to left) :

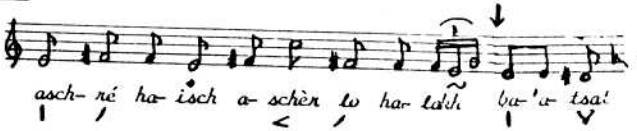
(1) beginning of a syllable (2) the end of a syllable (3) (4) between two words.



The melody is reconstructed according to these rules. The previous lower sign maintains its effect on the beginning of the syllable with the upper sign intervening only thereafter.

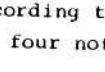
The reintegration of the basic scale degree is often impeded at the beginning of the next syllable by the appearance of a new sign. In this case it is either anticipated, if it does not overload the melody, or else avoided.

Ps 1:1



This choice, of course, is the affair of experts[1]. The Levites were musicians from father to sons. No doubt they were skilled in these necessary determinations.

x-x-x-x

The rhythm : there are no special signs for rhythm ; they would be superfluous. All syllables for the psalms are of equal length. We selected the eighth note as our unit of time (♪ or ♪). When two notes share a syllable they also share its rhythmical length : ♫ (according to our proportional notation) ; three notes triplet) ; or four notes  .

1. The presence of a lower sign after an upper sign on the same syllable is sometimes found. If the upper sign concerns a melisma (group of two or three notes) it is sometimes necessary to omit the last note so that there is no overloading of the melody. E.g., Ps.108 : 4b, p.31, v.7b.

Accents : the music reveals, by the place of the te'amim, the r[illegible] accentuation of the written text.

The tonic accent of one word can vary from one verse to another This corresponds to the particular spirit of the psalm in its original psalmody. The diction is always noble, gracious and expressive.

Modes : the musical notation of the Bible does not indicate any alterations. We mentioned in the Introduction that such signs did not exist in ancient "neumatic" notations among which the Biblical notation is ranked. We are obliged to discover the mode or modes for each psa This is the business of a trained musician, accustomed to such research, and it is obviously based on the verbal text of the psalm. The right mode, like well tailored clothes, closely follows the contours of th verbal expression. It places emphasis on the words and even on the syll bles which give full meaning to the sentence.

Temporary alterations : are often found for only two degrees, t 3rd and 4th, in many psalms. Wherever possible we let the key signature indicate them. Since these renditions are without measure bars the temporary alteration of a note continues for succeeding repeated not the same pitch. But when another note occurs we indicate the alteration again[1].

We will return to the question of modes in the Condensed Analys Part I.

x-x-x-x-x

We have explained the strict, invariable, if not "mathematical" application of the deciphering key. Because of the lack of accidenta signs in the ancient notation the choice of mode required is the con quence of the ancientness of the notation in question. The Benedictine Monks of Solesmes who have transcribed into modern notation the earli of Gregorian chants themselves state : "This question of modes is de cate, difficult, risky ; perhaps it will never be resolved ! In the mean time we can sing in a new mode these antiphons modified by time..."

We have thoroughly researched the modes of the psalms and have them our best efforts. We have a respectable precedent !

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1. We beg the reader's indulgence for any involuntary omissions.

PRATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Presentation of our Renditions

1. One tonality. In order to facilitate the analysis of our renditions all the melodies are written in the tonality of E, lower sign T, tonic E. The notes corresponding to all other signs are determined in relationship to this tonic E. In these 850 pages they are invariable (cf. Table of Meanings assigned to the signs at the end of each volume).

2. Half notes and quarter notes. In no wise do they represent rhythmical values. The half notes indicate the interpretation of a lower or upper sign for that particular syllable. The quarter notes signal the prolongation or the reintegration of the preceding lower sign. We stated already that this reintegration may be anticipated or omitted.

3. The alterations are indicated as much as possible by the key signature The alteration of a note has effect until a new note intervenes.

4. The rhythm. All syllables are of equal length. We have chosen the eighth note (♪ or ♪) as our unit of syllabic time. The half, third or quarter of this unit is expressed proportionally ( ) A slig retard sometimes occurs on certain syllables that are filled with a long melisma, a ritardando motivated by the word itself, e.g., Ps.76:12.

5. An accentuation occurs naturally on syllables with signs (when the melodic line is correctly interpreted). A syllable without a sign receives nc accent.

6. The tempo varies from one psalm to another according to the sense that is produced by the melody. We indicate the tempo at the beginning of each psalm. In case of a change in the middle, e.g., Ps.24:7, we indicate the new tempo.

7. The phonetic transliteration. The transcription is rendered in view of facilitating the reading of the Biblical text.

1) Each consonant is pronounced at the end of the syllable or word.
2) kh (khaf in Hebrew) and h (het in Hebrew) = ch in German, as in J.S. Bach.
3) e is short as in bed.
4) sch = sh.
5) ay = as in eye.

6) ts as in tsetse.
7) g is hard as in gate.
8) A capital letter in the middle of a word lightly reinforces a doubled letter.
9) The apostrophe represents the guttural Hebrew "ayin", before or after a vowel = a light accent that is impossible to transliterate into occidental phonetics.
10) All syllables comprising one word are hyphenated.

8. Vocal form and modes. At the beginning of each psalm these indications are given at the top of the page on the right. Cf. Abbreviations at the end of each volume.

9. Asterisks. Also placed at the top right of the beginning of each psalm, they mark the particular interest of this psalm as a whole. Whe placed in the middle of a verse, they indicate special interest therein.

10. CA (Condensed Analysis) : these abbreviations (cf. Abbreviations a the end of each volume) refer to the Condensed Analysis.

11. Notes in parenthesis : (a), (b), etc. refer to special remarks given at the end of the psalm, whereas (1), (2), etc. when found in the marg are bibliographical references listed on page L.

12. The numbers for the psalms will be different from the Vulgate Psalms 10-146, being one number higher (cf. Abbreviations).

x-x-x-x-x

CONDENSED ANALYSIS

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